



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT**

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 12 OCTOBER 2009

**Subject : EMERGENCY PLANNING ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND
EXHIBITION 15-17th JUNE 2009**

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This year's Emergency Planning Society's (EPS) Annual Conference and Exhibition was held at The Ricoh Arena, Coventry on 15th - 17th June 2009.
- 1.2 The Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority was represented by Councillor Tom Woodwark, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer, a Resilience Manager and a Senior Resilience Officer. The Head of Resilience from Newcastle City Council was also in attendance. Cllr Woodwark has also prepared a summary of the conference which can be made available upon request.
- 1.3 The conference focused on the key challenges in the field of Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, and consisted of a series of presentations and workshops. A Senior Resilience Officer from TWEPU was asked to deliver one of the main presentations to this event which was attended by almost 400 delegates.
- 1.4 One of the highlights of the Conference were the inaugural 'Emergency Planning Awards'. The Chief Emergency Planning Officer was asked by the EPS Chair and conference organisers to sit as a member of the judging panel, for these prestigious awards that will now be an annual event.
- 1.5 Running alongside the Conference was an exhibition with specialist companies displaying the latest equipment and services designed to provide the resources required in responding to modern day threats.

2 KEY PRESENTATIONS

- 2.1 Delegates heard from a wide range of speakers covering key issues:
 - Opening address- swine influenza
 - The UK perspective – Bruce Mann- Cabinet Office
 - Core Competencies
 - National Occupational Standards

- Multi Sector planning for a Pandemic
- Pandemic Preparedness
- Dealing with mass death
- Transboundary Threats
- Maintaining Alternative Water Supplies
- Journalism in a crisis
- 20 years on – reflection on disaster

3.0 OPENING ADDRESS

3.1 **Pat O'Rearden** (HSE Ireland) spoke of the planning arrangements carried out in Ireland since 2005 for a possible influenza A(H5N1) pandemic. His presentation focused on the emergency planning perspective following the recent spread of influenza A(H1N1) when previously developed plans and arrangements had been activated.

His main observations included:

- The importance of public information
- Developing a culture of self help within communities
- The maintenance of critical services while providing flu services
- Avoidance of overload within services
- Having good response structures in place
- The importance of having good business Continuity arrangements in place and those of key suppliers
- Developing good positive relationships with the media
- Allow for planning and adjustment of plans and arrangements during the pandemic

3.2 **Professor Jonathan Van-Tam** (University of Nottingham) gave an excellent overview of the recent spread of influenza A(H1N1) and the threats it poses. He said that preparation in the UK had been good, although much focus had been on influenza A(H5N1) originating in Asia, when the pandemic instead emerged from Central America in the form of A(H1N1), which had quite different characteristics and so planning assumptions necessarily had to be revised.

3.3 **Bruce Mann** (Director and Head of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat) gave his annual overview of Emergency Planning in the UK and the future challenges in this field:

- Pandemic Influenza: there has been good preparation over the past 5 years, however the priorities for now should include:

- Vigilance and reporting arrangements
- Having good planning arrangements in place to deal with potential increase in numbers and / or the severity of cases.
- Anti viral collection points and Flu friends
- Good Business Continuity arrangements developed and in place
- Arrangements for dealing with excess deaths
- Refreshing Planning assumptions, for example in relation to schools
- Wave 2 of the pandemic anticipated to possibly coincide with seasonal flu.

He gave an insight into how the Pandemic had impacted on a range of activities, and highlighted some of the issues which would continue to be progressed over the next year:

- CBRN – this still remains a high priority on the Governments agenda
- PITT recommendations- continued implementation of the recommendations of the PITT report
- National Emergency Plan – Fuel - Version 3 being issued
- Olympics- preparation of the Olympic Resilience project for the 2012 Olympic games
- Resilient Telecoms- Launch of Mobile Telecommunications privileged Access Scheme (MTPAS)
- National resilience Extranet- development of the programme for launch in November 2009
- CCA enhancement- Draft guidance expected Autumn 2009
- Community Resilience- Exploring the Governments contribution, through the development of workshops strategies and action plans to establish a programme of work to support communities
- Performance Development Framework - Publication of expectations set due in autumn 2009- to provide responders with self assessment tool for performance monitoring.

3.4 **CORE COMPETENCIES**

Eve Coles (Senior Teaching Fellow in Civil Protection and Chair EPS Education Standards Group) gave an update on the core competencies framework for Emergency Management, which outlines the skills required to work in Emergency Planning, and develop workforce capability. The purpose is to move towards greater professionalism and qualifications in the field, which ultimately raises the profile of the profession and demonstrates professionalism, accountability, trust and expertise.

3.5 **NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS- IN RESILIENCE TRAINING AND EXERCISING**

Joe Walton: Senior Resilience Officer (Training and Exercising) Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit

This Active Plenary session was facilitated by Joe Walton of TWEPU. He outlined the approach taken by TWEPU in implementing the National Occupational Standards (NOS) in its internal Training and Exercising policy, and the impact of NOS for civil contingencies on multi agency training and exercises within Northumbria LRF.

The session was well received and provoked a range of questions from the delegates.

3.6 MULTI SECTOR PLANNING FOR A PANDEMIC - Allan Bell (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)

Talked of the need to develop preparedness for pandemic influenza across a wide range of agencies and encouraged multi sector planning to address issues such as health, communications, transport and all essential services., greater loss of life and widespread disruption was avoided.

3.7 PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS - Mike Osborne (MD, ICM Business Continuity Services) Gave a presentation from the perspective of a business Continuity firm, highlighting that the public sector was far better prepared than the private sector in relation to pandemic influenza:

- Plans for future pandemics have primarily focussed on the health sector
- The status of Business Continuity in the UK should be enhanced in the private sector
- There is potential for a wider disruption to society as people fall ill
- Planning is being led by the Public Sector and there should be greater collaboration with the private sector
- There should be greater collaboration between the public and private sectors
- There are problems associated with lack of planning in the private sector particularly in SME's

3.8 DEALING WITH MASS DEATHS - Joseph Scanlon (Professor Emeritus at Carleton University, Ottawa) gave a presentation on excess deaths, and drew on examples of incidents over the past century, with emphasis on the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, which drew on an international response for identifying and dealing with the dead on a large scale. His conclusion was that although a pandemic is different there may potentially be similar problems to deal with in the next pandemic.

3.9 TRANSBOUNDARY THREATS - Jeremy Collymore (Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency)

Gave a theoretical presentation on how trans-national threats such as terrorism, climate change and pandemics impact on different nations, and

the need to raise the issue of trans national disaster reduction planning at the national level.

3.10 **MAINTAINING ALTERNATIVE WATER SUPPLIES - Simon White** (Anglian Water Services)

Gave an overview of the Pitdown incident of 2007:

- A parasite was found in drinking water, and domestic water was unsuitable for drinking;
- Large quantities of bottled water were sent to affected residents;
- Consideration was given to identified vulnerable groups, such as, the aged, pregnant women and babies, hospitals, prisons, and people receiving 'meals on wheels' service;
- A response plan was in place to deal with the situation;

Lessons learned from the incident from the incident:

- There is a need to plan for uncertainty, in the light of climate change;
- There is a need to consider Critical Infrastructure (who is dependant upon whom?)

3.11 **JOURNALISM IN A CRISIS - Nick Ravenscroft** (BBC News)

This presentation gave an insight into the operation of how the BBC News operates in a crisis and the role the media plays as part of the emergency response in emergency situations 24 hours a day.

3.12 **20 YEARS ON FROM A DECADE OF DISASTERS - Dr Dominic Elliott** (University of Liverpool)

This focused on how organisations universally fail to learn from crises, and how they should be better prepared to learn and adapt to differing events from past experiences.

3.13 **DISASTER ACTION - Sophie Tarassenko** (Disaster Action)

Disaster Action was set up by survivors and the bereaved from various disasters in the 1980s. It has worked in achieving improvements in the way agencies handle the needs of those involved in traumatic events. Sophie highlighted the need for support for not only the victims of an incident, but also their families.

4 **EPS AWARDS**

- 4.1 A new aspect of the conference were the inaugural EPS Awards. The Tyne and Wear Chief Emergency Planning Officer was asked to form part of the judging panel which considered nominations for a range of awards which

included 'Emergency Planner of the Year', 'Product of the Year' and 'Emergency Planning Team of the Year'. At a recent meeting of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) the CEPO recommended that strong consideration should be given to submitting a nomination for next years awards.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This Conference was yet again extremely useful and informative addressing a range of contemporary, pertinent issues. The Conference also provided an excellent opportunity to network with representatives of other relevant agencies and organisations, and the information gained will be used to inform the further development of plans and procedures in Tyne and Wear.
- 5.2 The request for two TWEPU officers to both present on the main stage, and to judge the prestigious new Emergency Planning Awards at this national showcase event reflects very positively on Tyne and Wear.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to note this report and the significant contribution to the Annual Conference from officers of Tyne and Wear EPU.

Background Papers

Fire and Rescue Authority Report: '*Emergency Planning Annual Conference and Exhibition 15-17th June 2009*' - 23rd February 2009